

## Message Text

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42  
ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 NSC-05

SP-02 PM-03 INR-05 INRE-00 CIAE-00 L-01 DODE-00 /039 W  
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O P 151649Z MAY 75  
FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5918  
INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY  
USMISSION NATO PRIORITY  
USCINCEUR PRIORITY

CONFIDENTIAL THE HAGUE 2496

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: MASS, NL  
SUBJECT: F-104 REPLACEMENT AIRCRAFT: MOD VREDELING'S  
VIEW PRIOR TO THE MAY 15 AFTERNOON MEETING OF  
CONSORTIUM MODS

REF: THE HAGUE 2367

SUMMARY: MOD VREDELING ASKED CHARGE TO COME BY HIS  
OFFICE AT MID-DAY MAY 15 FOR VREDELING'S VIEW ON STATE  
OF PLAY PRIOR TO MEETING OF CONSORTIUM MODS SCHEDULED  
TO START AT 5 THAT AFTERNOON IN THE HAGUE. REFERRING  
TO PREVIOUS CONVERSATION ON MAY 9, VREDELING SAID  
ACCORDING TO INFORMATION HE HAD RECEIVED ON PRIMIN  
TINDEMANN'S MEETINGS LAST WEEK WITH PRESIDENT GISCARD  
D'ESTAING AND PRIMIN CHIRAC GOF HAD NOT RPT NOT  
SIGNIFICANTLY AND CONCRETELY IMPROVED ITS MIRAGE F-1  
OFFER. ON THE OTHER HAND, VREDELING REMAINED CONCERNED  
THAT GOB, UNABLE TO OVERCOME ITS INTERNAL POLITICAL  
PROBLEMS, WOULD DROP OUT OF THE CONSORTIUM. IN THESE  
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CIRCUMSTANCES, VREDLING EMPHASIZED, IT WOULD BE  
POLITICALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO RECOMMEND FINAL  
GON APPROVAL OF THE F-16 PURCHASE. END SUMMARY.

1. VREDELING'S INFORMATION ON TINDEMANNS' MEETINGS IN PARIS WAS GENERALLY ALONG THE SAME LINES AS THAT HELPFULLY PROVIDED IN BRUSSELS 04313 ALTHOUGH WITH LESS SPECIFICITY. VREDELING COMMENTED THAT HE HIMSELF HAD SOMETIME AGO SUGGESTED THE IDEA OF A EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON SECURITY WITH A FOCUS ON ARMS REQUIREMENTS AND PRODUCTION, ALTHOUGH NOT IN A STRICTLY EC-9 CONTEXT. HOWEVER, HE THOUGHT THAT THE REVIVAL OF THE IDEA UNDER FRENCH AUSPICES AT THIS TIME CAME TOO LATE TO HAVE ANY RELEVANCE TO THE SELECTION OF A REPLACEMENT FIGHTER. LIKEWISE HE WAS SKEPTICAL THAT THE GOF WOULD FOLLOW THROUGH ON ITS EXPRESSION OF INTEREST IN REJOINING THE EURO GROUP. IN THIS CONNECTION HE THOUGHT IT SIGNIFICANT THAT, CONTRARY TO RECENT PRACTICE, THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR IN THE HAGUE HAD NOT BEEN AUTHORIZED TO GIVE VREDELING OR FONMIN VAN DER STOEL ANY INFORMATION ON TINDEMANNS' MEETINGS WITH GISCARD D'ESTAING AND CHIRAC. MOREOVER, THE FRENCH HAD NOT PUT ANYTHING IN WRITING ABOUT EITHER A EUROPEAN COUNCIL ON SECURITY OR THE POSSIBILITY OF FRANCE REJOINING THE EURO GROUP. VREDELING CONCLUDED, THEREFORE, THAT THE GOF HAD NOT CONCRETELY IMPROVED ON ITS LAST MIRAGE OFFER.

2. THE PROBLEM THAT CONTINUED TO TROUBLE VREDELING WAS THE REAL POSSIBILITY THAT THE GOB, UNABLE TO OVERCOME ITS INTERNAL POLITICAL DIVISIONS, WOULD DROP OUT OF THE F-16 CONSORTIUM. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, VREDELING EMPHASIZED, HE WOULD NO LONGER BE ABLE TO RECOMMEND TO THE DUTCH CABINET THAT IT GIVE FINAL APPROVAL FOR THE F-16 PURCHASE. CHARGE COMMENTED THAT THIS WAS AN EXTREMELY SERIOUS STATEMENT AND PRESSED VREDELING FOR AN EXPLANATION. VREDELING REPLIED THAT THE WHOLE DUTCH REPLACEMENT FIGHTER PROGRAM HAD BEEN PREDICATED ON THE NATO-APPROVED STANDARDIZATION CONCEPT LEADING LATER TO THE FORMATION OF A FOUR-NATION CONSORTIUM. IF THAT CONSORTIUM WERE TO LOSE ONE OF ITS TWO MOST IMPORTANT MEMBERS IT WOULD NOT RPT NOT BE POSSIBLE TO JUSTIFY

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TO THE DUTCH CABINET A PROPOSAL THAT THE GON SHOULD GO AHEAD WITH A THREE-NATION CONSORTIUM. VREDELING ANTICIPATED ON THE CONTRARY THAT AT THAT STAGE THE GON WOULD WANT TO THROW THE WHOLE REPLACEMENT FIGHTER QUESTION BACK INTO NATO. IT WOULD BE, VREDELING SAID, A WHOLE NEW SITUATION WITH POTENTIALLY VERY SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES.

3. VREDELING REFERRED IN THIS CONNECTION TO A MEETING HE HAD HAD THE NIGHT BEFORE WITH THE LABOR PARTY PARLIAMENTARY GROUP. IN CONTRAST TO EARLIER MEETINGS (WHICH HAVE BEEN REPORTED ON IN PREVIOUS EMBTELS), VREDELING SAID THE ATMOSPHERE WAS GOOD AND PERSONAL RELATIONS BETWEEN HIM

AND THE PARLIAMENTARIANS WERE NO LONGER A PROBLEM. HOWEVER, THE POLITICAL PROBLEMS WERE JUST AS GREAT AS EVER ALTHOUGH VREDELING INDICATED THAT HE MAY HAVE REACHED SOME KIND OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE GROUP NOT RPT NOT TO CAUSE A GOVERNMENT CRISIS OVER A GON DECISION TO BUY THE F-16. HE EMPHASIZED THAT ANY SUCH UNDERSTANDING WOULD BE BLOWN OUT OF THE WATER IF BELGIUM DROPPED OUT OF THE CONSORTIUM. ON TIMING, VREDELING COMMENTED THAT TINDEMANNS EXPRESSED INTEREST IN TALKING TO PRIMIN DEN UYL WHICH, WHILE QUITE UNDERSTANDABLE, COULD COMPLICATE MATTERS SINCE DEN UYL IS NOT SCHEDULED TO RETURN FROM SURINAM UNTIL MAY 22, THE DAY BEFORE THE FINAL GON CABINET MEETING ON THE REPLACEMENT FIGHTER QUESTION. VREDELING AGREED THAT PERHAPS TINDEMANNS ASSUMED THAT DEN UYL WOULD BE COMING BACK SOMEWHAT SOONER. SINCE TIME WAS PRESSING VREDELING MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY THAT TINDEMANNS MIGHT TELEPHONE DEN UYL IN SURINAM.

4. VREDELING SAID THAT THE LINE HE WOULD TAKE IN THE CONSORTIUM MEETING LATER THAT AFTERNOON WOULD BE THAT THE GON WAS READY TO MAKE A DECISION FOR THE F-16 IF BELGIUM AND THE OTHER TWO MEMBERS WERE. CONVERSELY, IF VANDEN BOEYNANTS (WHOM VREDELING APPEARS NEITHER TO LIKE NOR TRUST) PROCRASTINATED FURTHER OR MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY OF BELGIUM DROPPING OUT OF THE CONSORTIUM, VREDELING INTENDED TO PUT THE ONUS SQUARELY ON THE GOB FOR THE COLLAPSE OF THE F-16 PROGRAM. VREDELING REPLIED IN THE NEGATIVE TO A SUGGESTION THAT HE AND THE DANISH AND

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NORWEGIAN DEFENSE MINISTERS MIGHT PUT PRESSURE ON VANDEN BOEYNANTS BY ANNOUNCING THAT THEY WERE PREPARED TO GO AHEAD WITH THE F-16 EVEN IF BELGIUM DROPPED OUT. INDICATING THAT HE WAS SKATING ON VERY THIN POLITICAL ICE IN HOLLAND, VREDELING SAID THAT HIS MANDATE FROM THE CABINET WOULD SIMPLY NOT ALLOW HIM TO GO THAT FAR. VREDELING CONCLUDED THAT HE RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR PUTTING PRESSURE ON THE BELGIANS AND HE WAS IN FAVOR OF DOING IT IN THE RIGHT WAY, BUT NOT RPT NOT AT THE RISK OF BRINGING DOWN THE TINDEMANNS GOVERNMENT.

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